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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1 Summary: Major Chinese-language Taiwan dailies focused their coverage December 24-27 on moves by pan-Blue legislators to reject review of the long-stalled U.S. arms procurement bill, the meeting between KMT Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng and PFP Chairman James Soong, the passing away of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Wang Daohan, and the government's failure to meet a legal deadline to release its holdings in key media outlets. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on its front page December 24 that read: "[U.S.] Arms Procurement Bill Now Back to Its Starting Point; Bian: the Question Lies in National Identity." The newspaper also quoted an anonymous U.S. official on its page three as saying the United States hopes to see the pan-Blue camp propose feasible alternatives as to how Taiwan will strengthen its national defense capabilities. The "Liberty Times" carried a news story on its page four December 27 that quoted a senior Taiwan official as saying it will be more difficult for Taiwan to purchase the items listed in the U.S. arms procurement bill if Taiwan does not make the decision to procure them by 2008. The newspaper also reported that President Chen Shui-bian will likely meet with KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou in February 2006 to find a solution for the stalled arms procurement bill.

2 In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the centrist "China Times" discussed the death of ARATS Chairman Wang Daohan and cross-strait relations; the editorial said President Chen Shui-bian has basically handed in a blank examination paper with regard to cross-strait policy over the past five years and cross-strait relations have now embarked on a whole new period of adjustments. National Taiwan University Professor Chu Yun-han said in a separate commentary in the "China Times" that "the doubts of Taiwan's mainstream public view toward the legitimacy and necessity of the [U.S.] arms procurements reveals that opinion leaders in Taiwan's private sector have begun to sense that even the United States has yet to uncover its best strategy in the face of the rise of China." End summary.

A) "A Few Strokes in Memory of the Passing Era of C.F. Koo and Wang Daohan"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (12/26):

"China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Wang Daohan passed away last Saturday within less than a year of the death of the former chairman of Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation, C. F. Koo. Wang's death symbolizes the end of an era in which cross-strait relations were marked by meetings between Koo and Wang. Cross-strait relations have now embarked on a whole new period of adjustments, along with changes in the situation inside Taiwan and China, respectively. .

"Over the past five years, since the DPP came into power, Taiwan's cross-strait policy has tended to focus more on preaching rather than on practicing. President Chen forecasted from time to time that both sides of the Taiwan Strait would soon start the Three Links and that he wanted to invite Beijing's leaders to come to Taiwan for a drink; he also constantly extended olive branches [to Beijing] during addresses he made on traditional Chinese holidays. But then again, he would make [provocative] remarks such as calling for the writing of a new constitution or initiating a referendum for Taiwan [that would] get on Beijing's nerves; the language he used during [political] campaigns could be even more provocative. As a result, the cross-strait impasse remained unchanged over time, and the Taiwan people started to think that it would be good news so long as cross-strait relations did not deteriorate. No matter whether President Chen and the DPP want to admit it, Taiwan's ruling party has in fact handed in a blank examination paper with regard to its cross-strait policy over the past five years.

"The truth is that over the past few years, cross-strait relations have been cool in the public sector but heating up in the private sector. The ruling party has remained

motionless while opposition parties have been eagerly seeking to build new platforms for dialogue. The DPP did almost nothing [to improve cross-Straits relations] except for putting on the brakes. . Given the fact that Taiwan's opposition leaders' visits to China [last summer] have successfully shaped the 'win-win discourse' of peace and reconciliation to have it become Taiwan's mainstream public view, [the DPP's] label of 'selling out Taiwan' has gradually lost its effectiveness, as evidenced in the rising reputation for the KMT. . It is thus no wonder that many critics no longer anticipate that Chen will be able to break the cross-Straits-relations deadlock during his remaining time in office. ."

B) "Getting Through a Critical Period"

Chu Yun-han, professor of political science at National Taiwan University, noted in the "Weekly Commentary" column of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (12/26):

"Also during the past six years, a new thirst has been growing inside Taiwan, the strong desire that Taiwan could break away from its predicament and come out new and improved. Local intellectuals and the private sector have started to fear less the examination of 'political correctness,' [and have] begun to locate again their ability to judge and imagine. As a result, a new thinking with regard to cross-Straits relations and Taiwan's future has begun to bud. The doubts of Taiwan's mainstream public view toward the legitimacy and necessity of the [U.S.] arms procurements revealed that opinion leaders in Taiwan's private sector began to sense that even the United States has yet to uncover its best strategy in the face of China's rise. [They also saw that] Washington's China policy will continue to swing between the two extremes of engagement and containment and that as a result, Washington can only put Taiwan in a state of strategic suspension, blocking Taiwan the opportunities to find a better way out. The new thinking now being developed [in Taiwan] called upon the island to try to get rid of its puppet role and not to play the game according to the strategic schemes of any side. All the more, there is no need for Taiwan to become the rope that sustains pressure from all sides in the strategic tug of war between the United States, Japan and China.

"In the wake of Taiwan opposition leaders' visits to China, not only the fighting inside the pan-Blue camp about which route it should take has evidently subdued, but there are also mounting voices inside the pan-Green camp calling for a more pragmatic attitude in dealing with cross-Straits relations. The pragmatists inside the pan-Green camp have come to realize that only when President Chen takes the initiative in pushing for cross-Straits economic and trade normalization during his remaining term of office can the DPP avoid a possible major defeat in the Legislative Yuan elections slated for the end of 2007 and thus give itself a chance to fight in the [2008] presidential election. If [Chen or DPP fail to do so,] they might have to hand over their administration authority at the end of 2007 and let the pan-Blue camp harvest the political fruit of three links after the 2008 election. ."

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